

Annual Physical: 18-21 years

Welcome to adulthood! This handout has information to help you transition from late adolescence into young adulthood.

General Advice

- As you leave high school, you may enter college, enter a trade, start a job or join the military. This is a great time to find activities that you are really interested in, such as volunteering.
- In making new friends, choose people who share your interests and approach to life.
- It's still important to stay connected with your family as you grow into adulthood.
- Speak to your doctor if you are worried about your living or food situation. There are community agencies and programs that can help.

Sexual Health

- Sexuality is an important part of your life. If you have questions or concerns, talk to your doctor.
- If you are having sexual contact with anyone, it's important that all partners are comfortable with it. No one should feel pressured to do anything they don't want to do.
- Make healthy decisions about your sexual behavior. Make sure to use barrier methods such as condoms to prevent sexually transmitted infections.
- If you are having penile/vaginal sex and do not desire a pregnancy, make sure you consider pregnancy prevention. Talk with your doctor about the different birth control options available to you.

Social Wellbeing

- Find fun, safe things to do with friends.
- Always talk through problems and never use violence.
- Healthy dating relationships are built on respect, concern and doing things both of you like to do. If you're worried that you might be in an unhealthy relationship, it's important to tell an adult you trust, like a parent or your doctor.
- When dating or in any situations related to sexual behavior, remember that "No" means NO. Saying "No" is OK.
- If you feel unsafe in your home or have been hurt by someone, please speak to your doctor. There are hotlines and community agencies that can provide confidential help, including SAFELINK, the Massachusetts domestic violence hotline: 877-785-2020. Counselors and staff can review all of your options with you. Phones are answered 24 hours/day.

Emotional Wellbeing

Everyone has stress in their lives. The transition from adolescence to adulthood can be stressful.

Stress is your body's way of responding to different demands. When there are too many demands or difficult demands, your body starts to feel stressed out.

Even positive life events—going to college, starting a new job or moving—can cause stress. Figure out a healthy way to cope with stress.

Stress Management Tips

- **Focus on your support system.** Spend time with people who care about you and let them know you are feeling stressed. If your stress doesn't go away or keeps getting worse, talk to your doctor or a professional counselor.
- **Get enough sleep.** Good-quality sleep contributes to good health, mood and memory, as well as your ability to focus and achieve more in less time. Practice good **sleep hygiene**. This includes going to bed and waking at the same time; avoiding caffeine for several hours before bed; avoiding screens (TV, phone and other devices) for 1-2 hours before bed; and sleeping in a cool, dark room. Talk to your doctor if you have trouble falling asleep or staying asleep.
- **Get moving.** Any type of exercise can act as a stress reliever, from walking, jogging, swimming, and tennis to yoga, Tai chi and weightlifting. Aim for 2 ½ hours or more per week of moderate-intensity physical activity.
- **Eat well.** Focus on vegetables, fruits and healthy proteins. Limit processed foods, sugar and alcohol. Avoid caffeine if it makes you feel anxious. Choose water instead of soda, juice or sports drinks.
- **Practice mindfulness.** Meditate or do breathing/relaxation exercises. There are phone apps, websites and books that can help you develop these skills. Take time away from social media if it makes you feel anxious.

Social Media

Your online identity and reputation are shaped in much the same way as your real-life identity. Safeguard your passwords and change them often. Treat others with respect and never post hurtful or embarrassing messages.

Think twice before hitting “enter”. Remember that anything you post online (videos, photos, comments) is no longer private and often can't be taken down or deleted from the Internet. Posting something that is inappropriate can even become a problem years later when you are applying for a job or college.

Substance Use

- Cigarettes, vaping, drugs, and alcohol can cause serious problems both with your current and future health. Make smart and healthy choices when offered any of these.
- Avoid risky behaviors such as **binge** drinking (4 or more drinks for females, 5+ drinks for males at one time).
- If you smoke or vape, there are many resources, including doctors, to help you come up with ways to quit. Having a quit smoking counselor can double your chances of quitting for good. Here are some resources to help you quit: SmokefreeTXT program (text QUIT to iQUIT (47848)) or the free quit line from the Massachusetts Department of Public Health at 800-QUITNOW.

Important Numbers

- MA Behavioral Health Help Line: 833-773-2445 (call or text)
- SAFELINK (MA domestic violence hotline): 877-785-2020
- HAVEN Domestic Violence Help Line: 617-724-0054
- Smoking Quit Line (free): 800-TRY-TO-STOP
- Poison Control: 800-222-1222
- My doctor's office: _____

Oral Health

- ✓ Create a routine for brushing your teeth twice a day and for flossing once a day.
- ✓ Visit the dentist every 6 months.
- ✓ Don't use chewing tobacco.

Vaccines (*vaccine schedule may vary slightly by practice)

- The influenza vaccine is recommended during flu season.

Safety Tips

- Create an emergency plan and practice what to do in case of an emergency.
- Use safety equipment during sports.
- Wear a helmet when riding a bike, motorcycle or ATV, or when skiing or skateboarding.
- Keep earbud volume low to protect your hearing.
- Encourage use of safety equipment during sports.
- Don't share your prescription medicines and do not use other people's medicines.
- Use sunscreen and wear hats/sunglasses for sun protection.
- Protect your skin by avoiding tanning beds.
- Fighting and carrying weapons can be dangerous. Talk to a trusted adult, such as your family, teachers or doctor about how to avoid these situations.

Driving Safety

- Never text or talk on the phone while you drive. If you need to answer or make a phone call, the safest thing to do is pull over to the side of the road or park your car in a safe location.
- Don't ride in a car with someone who you think has used alcohol or drugs. If you feel unsafe driving or riding with someone, call someone you trust to drive you.

Confidentiality

The doctor-patient relationship is built on trust. Confidentiality is a big component of maintaining trust. The information that you share with your doctor is kept private. It is important for you to share information with your doctor so they can give you the best care. Your doctor cares about you and wants to keep you safe and healthy. Ask your doctor if you have any questions about confidentiality. Once you turn 18, if you want your parents/guardians to help communicate with your doctor, you will need to fill out a release of information form to allow your parents continued participation in your medical care.

Health Care Transition

Throughout your life, family members or caregivers have helped you with your health and healthcare needs, such as calling for appointments, filling out forms or keeping track of medications. Now that you are older, taking care of your health is your responsibility. This will not happen overnight, and you do not have to do it alone. Your family, caregivers and your doctor are here to help. To learn more, visit www.gottransition.org.

For some young adults, they must change to a new doctor who cares for adults. Discuss with your primary care doctor about when and how to make this change.

Websites

- **Got Transition**
www.gottransition.org
A resource that aims to help youth and young adults move from pediatric to adult care
- **SmokefreeTXT Program**
www.teen.smokefree.gov
A free text messaging program with advice on how to quit. Text QUIT to iQUIT
- **MGH Clay Center for Young Healthy Minds**
www.mghclaycenter.org
A free, practical online educational resource dedicated to supporting the mental health of young people